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THE GOD PROPOSED

FOR

OUR NATIONAL CONSTITUTION:

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A Lecture,

GIVEN IN MUSIC HALL, BOSTON, ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, MAY 5, 1872.

BY

WILLIAM DENTON.

BOSTON:
PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM DENTON.
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Price Ten Cents.

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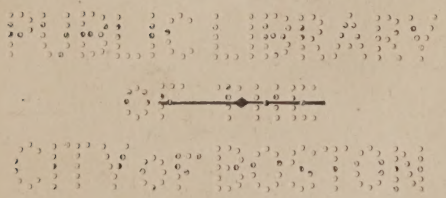

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THE GOD PROPOSED FOR OUR NATIONAL CONSTITUTION.

It is said, that, "once upon a time," the frogs were desirous of having a king. On looking around for a suitable individual, they spied a fat ox feeding in the meadow. Admiring his majestic appearance, they sent a deputation to wait upon him, and ask him to accept the position. The ox, nothing loath, strode down to the marsh, and was properly installed king of frogdom. His happy subjects crowded around him to present their congratulations; but, unfortunately for them, as he moved his ponderous body to return the compliments that were croaked from every side, beneath his royal hoofs lay a dozen of his loyal subjects crushed to the earth. Too late they discovered that an ox, though a fine-looking animal, is no fit monarch for frogs.

Before we think of placing a God in the Constitution of these United States, it must be well to examine the character of the individual proposed for the position, or we may find ourselves in the condition of the frogs in the fable; death following every step of our God, and we powerless to stop the destruction.

Up to the present time, I have heard of but one God who has been proposed for the highest of all offices in the gift of the people; and that is the Christian's God, whom Jesus declared to be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The God, then, that we are asked to make the God of these United States, is Jehovah, the God of the Jews, whose sayings and deeds are recorded in their so-called sacred books and in the Christian Scriptures, from which we can, fortunately, obtain a knowledge of his actual character. It is furnished, if we are to believe what these books say, by himself and his friends, it is true; and this must be taken into account, as we may suppose them to represent him in a more favorable light than the facts will really warrant.

Moses gives us a portrait of him that is very beautiful: "He is the Rock; his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he" (Deut. xxxii. 4). What an excellent example to place before the officers of our government! Of himself he says, "The Lord God is merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exod. xxxiv. 6). Who could object to such a God as this? He needs but to be known to be loved, but to be heard to be obeyed. It may be well, however, to see whether his deeds correspond with his words. Men accepted for what they claim to be, and State-prison convicts are patterns of all excellency. It may possibly be so with gods. Let us see.

Jehovah informs Adam (Gen. ii. 17), that, if he shall eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, in the day that he eats of it he shall surely die. But, instead of dying in that day, Adam lived more than nine hundred years afterward. Could Jehovah have made a

mistake? That is, of course, impossible. Did he really intend to deceive the man? Was not some other kind of death meant? If truthful in every other respect, we will give him the benefit of the doubt; but, if otherwise, we shall suspect him, to say the least.

According to the sixteenth chapter of 1st Samuel, Jehovah told Samuel to go to Jesse the Bethlehemite, and anoint one of his sons, whom he had provided for king over Israel, in the place of Saul. But Samuel replies, "How can I go? If Saul hear it, he will kill me." Saul was king, and he would kill the man who thus sought to put another man in his place. Now, mark the advice of Jehovah: "And the Lord said, Take a heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the Lord." Was it for that Jehovah wished him to go? No such thing; but to anoint David king. What was he to take the heifer for? To deceive Saul, and thus escape the consequences of his deed by lying. You may call that a white lie. The crime of lying consists in the deception practised; and in this respect it was as black as any lie. The difference between that and an ordinary lie is, that it was a mean, cowardly lie. The man who tells an out-and-out lie stands on his feet when he tells it; but the man who tells a lie like that crawls on the ground like a snake. I have no respect for cowards, be they men or gods. How much better it would have been for Jehovah to say to Samuel, "Tell the truth, and I will attend to the consequences"! or, better still, "If you are afraid to do what I tell you, let it alone, and I will find a more courageous man"!

If we are to have a constitutional God of the United States, I think it will be generally acknowledged that he should be a *truthful God*. I know that politicians,

as a class, care but little about truth, unless it can be made to subserve their purposes. I know that partisan newspapers, especially just before election, care as little about truth as a hungry hyena does about grace before meat. I know, also, that many priests and orthodox tract-society managers are not very scrupulous about lying, when they think it will help "the Lord's cause." This I know: but the body of the people love truth; feed on lies only because the truth is withheld from them; and, if they are to have a national God, want, as they must surely need, a God of truth; one who will neither lie himself, nor induce others to lie. I object to Jehovah, then, as our God, because *he is a liar.*

After the separation of Abram and Lot, Jehovah told Abram to walk through the length and breadth of the land of Canaan, and said, "All the land which thou seest, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed forever" (Gen. xiii. 15). He made this promise still more definite subsequently by saying, "Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the River Euphrates" (Gen. xv. 18). The promise made and sworn to by Jehovah to Abraham was repeated to Isaac and Jacob. How was it fulfilled? Abraham himself never received a foot of it (Acts vii. 5). Nearly five hundred years passed away before his seed commenced the conquest of the promised country; and so slowly did it proceed, that it was not till nearly four hundred years after this that even Zion, the stronghold of Jerusalem, was taken from the Jebusites (2 Sam. v. 7); and less than four hundred years after this the kingdom of Judah was overthrown by Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. lii.). To-day the nine thousand

Jews that dwell in Palestine are foreigners; and they may see what the promises of Jehovah are worth, and how little dependence is to be placed upon his word. Even in the latter part of David's reign, and that of Solomon's, when the country of the Israelites was most extended, the northern part of the promised territory was in the hands of the Phœnicians and the Syrians, while the southern part was held by the Philistines and the Eygptians.

"From Dan to Beersheba," which designated the length of Canaan, even near the close of David's reign (2 Chr. xxi. 2), is only about a hundred and forty miles; while the distance from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates, the land promised to the seed of Abraham, is between five and six hundred miles. The little that the Israelites did possess was only for a few years at a time, fitful occupancy of a small territory, obtained by theft and murder, only held by continual fighting, and which they have lost possession of for more than two thousand years. This Jehovah, who thus swore to the fathers and lied to the children, is the very last of all gods to be chosen by a people who love truth, and desire it to become universal.

The same Jehovah lied to David and his descendants, lied plainly and unequivocally. In the 89th Psalm we read, "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish forever, and build up thy throne to all generations." And again, "His seed also will I make to endure forever, and his throne as the days of heaven." But the most definite promise is this: "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my

commandments; then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established forever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven."

If the sun had endured no longer than David's throne, we had never been; and, if the moon had been no better established, we had never seen it.

Long after this, when there seemed to be danger of the utter destruction of the kingdom of Judah, the promise is repeated to Jeremiah (Jer. xxxiii. 17): "Thus saith the Lord: David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel; neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before me to offer burnt-offerings and to kindle meat-offerings, and to do sacrifice continually." Again he says, "If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers."

Let us see how these unconditional promises, from the God that would not lie to David, were fulfilled. David reigned about forty years, then Solomon forty; but his son Rehoboam lost the government of ten tribes, which were ruled over by Jeroboam, a man in no way related to David. And the kingdom of Judah,

as the government of the remaining tribes, Judah and Benjamin, was then called, lasted under the dynasty of David about four hundred years, till Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem, carried the people into captivity, and destroyed "the throne of David."

What kind of a forever is five hundred years? When Jehovah told Jeremiah that David should never want a man to sit upon his throne, he must have known, that within ten years, at the outside, there would be no throne of David to sit on. It is said that he who will swear will lie; and it appears to be as true of gods as men. Where is the throne of David to-day, that was to be as the sun before Jehovah? Where are the Levites offering burnt-offerings? and where are they doing sacrifice continually?

The condition of the Jew among us, which has been appealed to as a proof of the truth of the Bible, is one of the strongest evidences of the untruth of Jehovah. Destitute of a nation, destitute of the ceremonials of his ancient faith, he shows us the sad consequences of the trust of his race in the promise-making, but no less promise-breaking, Jehovah, who has ruined one nation, and whom traitors to freedom are inviting to ruin this country also, — the only refuge for the God-cursed of all lands.

Some children lie in their infancy, but, when their reasoning faculties become active, see the impropriety of it, and thenceforth speak the truth; but Jehovah does not seem to improve in this respect with age. I find Paul stating (2 Thess. ii. 11), that, because certain people would not receive the love of the truth, God should send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned.

The God that Paul believed in was Jehovah; and, because people do not love the truth, he will lie to them, that they may believe the lie, and be damned! How much love of truth has that Being who adopts such lying measures? how much justice has he who lies to people, and then damns them because they believe him? and how much propriety is there in putting this lying Jehovah into our national Constitution?

Bad as was the treatment that the Jews received at the hands of Jehovah, it was the best ever vouchsafed by him to any people: for he is a *partial God;* and I bring this as another objection against him. He chooses Abram, out of all the Arab chiefs of his time, to be the father of his peculiar people; he loves Jacob rather than Esau, and that before either of them is born, "that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand," as Paul tells us. He chose the Israelites from all the nations of the earth, delivered them from Egypt by a series of most astounding miracles, blew a passage for them through the Red Sea, fed them with bread from heaven, and sent quails by the million, caused water to spring from the solid rock, and for forty years never allowed the clothes on their backs nor the shoes on their feet to grow old or worn. He says, "The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are on the face of the earth" (Deut. vii. 6). And again: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth" (Amos iii. 2). The peaceful and industrious Chinese, the philosophic Hindoos, the intelligent and religious Egyptians, the brave Assyrians, and the artistic Greeks, Jehovah never knew; for them he never cared. In the darkness, a thousand million of God's

neglected sons groped through the centuries; but this handful of Israelites, his beloved children, lived in a blaze of divine glory, and were permitted, nay, commanded, to butcher their brothers who would not become their slaves, and bow down and worship their little-souled and partial God; and those who are moving for the Jehovah amendment in the Constitution not only worship this unjust Divinity, but seem to be desirous to compel their more enlightened and more manly neighbors to worship him also.

This country justly prides itself upon its general intelligence. The few do not shoot up like pines, and the many squat like toad-stools. The average culture of the people of the Northern States, at least, is probably as great as or greater than that of any other country on the globe. If we are to have a God for our nation, he should be an intelligent God, or how can intelligent people respect him? I object, then, to Jehovah, because he is an *ignorant God*, — so ignorant of geography, that he does not know either the shape of the earth or its size, and supposed that a forty-days' rain would drown it (Gen. vii. 4). He knows so little of astronomy, that he supposes the earth to be the universe, to which the heavens hold the same relation as a curtain does to a bed (Isa. xl. 22). He thinks the stars are "set" in this stretched curtain; and when he shall roll it up, as he threatens to do at some time, he supposes the stars will fall to the earth (Isa. xxxiv. 4; Rev. vi. 13). He has so little knowledge of the number of species of animals on the globe, that he supposed Noah could preserve, in a box about five hundred feet long, less than one hundred broad, and about fifty high, seven of every kind of bird, male and female, and two of every other kind of

animal, and provisions for them for twelve months; one-fourth of which could never have got into it. He is so ignorant of zoölogy, that he tells the Israelites they must not eat the hare, because it chews the cud (Lev. xi. 6), — a thing that no hare does; thus mistaking a rodent for a ruminant. He knows so little of geology, that he supposes the earth was made less than six thousand years ago, and brought into a condition similar to the present in less than a week; and is so ignorant of the history of man, whom he pretends to have made, that he supposes all human beings descended from a single pair, who were made long after the valley of the Nile was occupied by civilized people; and then, to crown his imbecility, threatens man with damnation unless he believes that of which he fails to give him sufficient evidence. There is not a boy of fourteen years of age in any New-England grammar-school who does not know more than this Jewish Jehovah is represented in the Bible as knowing; and a man so ignorant would be a laughing-stock to his whole neighborhood. The Hottentots of Africa might debate whether a God as ignorant should be admitted into the constitution of their government; but the men who propose him for the United-States Constitution are the deadliest enemies of intelligence.

As a nation, the United States has been a grand success. The fathers of our country undertook to form a republic uncursed by kings and government priests; where all men could have liberty of conscience, for all religious faiths should be equal in the eye of the law. They sought to make a home for the oppressed, the king-cursed, the poverty-stricken, of all lands; and they did it. We undertook to rid the land of slavery,

that it might be in spirit, as in name, the land of the free; and we have done it. Much remains to be done to make this country what the wisest and best desire: and, if we are to have a God for the country, it should be one who has been successful; one in whom we can have confidence that he will help us to succeed in carrying out still needed reforms. I object, then, to Jehovah, because *he has utterly failed in nearly every thing that he has undertaken.* Hell only exists in consequence of the failure of heaven. The very first human beings that Jehovah made failed so utterly, that he cursed them almost as soon as they were out of his hands. The world that he had made, and pronounced good, was such a dead failure, that it grieved him at his heart, and he destroyed it, and tried it over again with scarcely any better success. He chose the Israelites, that they might be a holy people unto him; yet they turned out to be the vilest of wretches, and made him so angry, that he cursed them in his wrath, and destroyed them in his fury. Mankind failed so utterly, that he left heaven to save them; and for this purpose became a Jewish baby, and subsequently a carpenter and a preacher; allowed men to kill him, and then sent his disciples unto all the world to tell people that they might be saved by believing the story. Yet so bunglingly did he manage the whole matter, that not one in fifty of the world's population since that time has ever believed the account; and the more intelligent people become, the less inclined they are to believe it, and the more certain they are to be damned, — the very fate from which Jehovah professes to have undertaken to deliver them, — and the myriads of hell's victims are to howl his failure to all eternity.

Shall we suffer a God who so mismanages his own affairs to manage ours? Obey such a God as this, and we should soon be in the condition of his chosen people when they wished to return to the Egypt they had fled from, or as they were when he sold them into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar.

One reason of Jehovah's want of success may be that *he is vacillating*, — lacking that strong will, governed by intelligence, which moves toward its object without flinching, because wisdom has determined the course marked out to be the best.

"It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart" (Gen. vi. 6). It is therefore presumable, that, if he had known how he would turn out, he never would have made him. After leading the Israelites into the wilderness, they so provoked him, that he declared he would smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them; and would have done it, apparently, had not Moses expostulated with him, and led this vacillating Divinity to "repent of the evil that he thought to do unto his people" (Exod. xxxii. 14). Moses saw, that, if he did this, his reputation among other nations would be destroyed; and, on presenting this view of the matter to Jehovah, he appears to have seen the wisdom of the suggestion. A prime-minister often knows more than a king; and a prophet, we see, may be more intelligent than the God that sends him.

Jehovah sent word to Hezekiah, "Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live" (Isa. xxxviii.). But Hezekiah, as many others would have done, felt as if he would rather live than die: he said, "Remember now, O Lord! I beseech thee, how I have walked

before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore." This appears to have led to a reconsideration of the matter on the part of Jehovah, and he sent word to him that he had lengthened his days fifteen years.

We read that the Ninevites at one time offended Jehovah greatly, and he sent Jonah to announce to them their unconditional destruction. Jonah was unwilling to go; and it required a three-days' residence in a whale to make him obedient to the heavenly voice. When "he reached Nineveh, he went through the streets crying, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." But, at the preaching of this foreign prophet, the whole city repented, and fasted, and "cried mightily unto God;" and then God repented, and concluded to spare the repentant city, regardless of the feelings of Jonah, who thought he was badly used. If Jehovah knew the end from the beginning, he must have known that the Ninevites would repent, and the city be spared; and I think Jonah had just ground of complaint in being sent there with that lie in his mouth.

What confidence can we have in a God who is grieved at his heart at the foreseen consequences of his own actions, and undoes in a day what it took him more than a thousand years to accomplish, and then, after it is over, promises that he will not do it again? (Gen. viii. 21.)

I object to Jehovah's name in our national Constitution also, because he is a *male God*, and neither has, nor ever had, any female associated with him in the divine government. He is a stern father, chas-

tising in anger every unrepentant son. But where is the tender-hearted mother, that with a kiss receives the erring child to her bosom, and melts him into repentance with her tears? God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost; three unmarried males, constituting a monkish trinity, from all eternity to all eternity. I object to him (them) as utterly unfit to reign over us, and especially when women shall have their political rights; and the day cannot be far distant. This is the God who thunders in the ears of the first woman, "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee;" who made man first, and woman only because man needed somebody to help him; who set a trap for humanity, and baited it so that human nature could not resist the temptation, and then cursed all women because the first one went into it. A heavenly mother would never have cursed all her daughters with pain on account of the trivial fault of the first; nor would she ever have made the penalty for their misdoing unutterable woe forever. If we are to have a God in the Constitution of the United States, it must be a God in whom the sexes are equally represented, or our Government will be as one-sided as the Bible. It is altogether too much so now.

The fate of the Jews, who trusted in this Jehovah, should forever prevent us from following their example.

The Lord, we are told, delivered Israel out of the hand of the Egyptians, broke the yoke of their bondage, and became their guide to the land of promise. So near was it, that a man could have walked there in a couple of weeks; but, under the guidance of Jehovah, it took them forty years, and only two men arrived there who started from Egypt. So disgusted were

the Israelites with the conduct of their God, that they desired to return to Egypt, preferring the slavery of Pharaoh to that of Jehovah. Nay, they even made a golden calf, and worshipped it in preference, and said, "These be thy gods, O Israel! that brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." And there is no doubt that the calf had as much to do with it as Jehovah. But Jehovah was so angry, that he caused the Levites, who were just as guilty as the rest, to murder three thousand of the people in consequence (Exod. xxxii. 28).

When their descendants arrived at the promised land, they were compelled to fight for many years in order to obtain possession of what Jehovah promised to give them. Whenever they failed in battle, it was because Jehovah was angry with them, of course; and, whenever they succeeded, it was because he helped them. But his help seems to have done them but little good. This is the way that he served them, as he himself has recorded for our instruction: "The anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil; and they were sadly distressed" (Judges ii. 14, 15).

"The Lord strengthened Eglon, king of Moab, against Israel." "So the children of Israel served Eglon, king of Moab, eighteen years" (Judges iii. 12, 14).

Shall we, who have just liberated our slaves, put this Jehovah into our Constitution, who thus kidnapped a whole nation, and sold them for slaves?

"The Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin, king

of Canaan," " and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel." And so continues the disgraceful record. Out of three hundred and thirty years, in the time of the Judges, when Jehovah was their king, they were slaves, in the hands of their enemies, for one hundred and eleven years, or more than one-third of the time. We are told, it is true, that all this happened because the children of Israel did evil in the sight of Jehovah, and because they would not obey his commands; but when we read (Judges xiii. 1) that " the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Philistines forty years," the explanation is insufficient. In forty years, in a state of bondage, there could have been very few alive of those whose sins drove them into captivity; and what kind of a God can that be who kept innocent millions in slavery for the fault of a few? A sensible man would have modified his commands in the first place, or taken such measures as would have led the people to see that it was to their interest to obey them. As Jehovah did neither, he proved his unfitness to rule over the Israelites, and his infinite unfitness to rule over us.

On one occasion Jehovah sold them into the hands of the Philistines and the children of Ammon, who sorely oppressed them, so that they cried unto him. But he replied, " Ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more" (Judges x. 13). But even this was a lie; for the very next chapter tells us that the Lord delivered the children of Ammon into the hands of Jephthah, and they were subdued before the children of Israel. But the poor wretches were only delivered for a few years, to be sold again into the hands of their enemies by their Godly owner.

The Israelites did much better in the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon, than at any previous time; for they had less to do with Jehovah, or rather with his priests, and more to do with men who understood their needs and attended to their supply. But their whole history, from the exodus to the destruction of Jerusalem, is one long, bloody trail down the ages.

Make Jehovah God of these United States, and let the people become obedient to his commands as they would be explained by his priests, and our history would be like theirs, and this paradise of liberty become a Pandemonium of tyranny, a plague-spot on the face of the earth.

A man may be known, it is said, by the company he keeps; and why not a god? Judging Jehovah by this, I cannot but regard him as utterly unfit for the office to which his American friends are so desirous of elevating him.

He is "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." Abraham is styled in the Bible "the father of the faithful, and the friend of God;" an Arab chief, rude and hospitable, but crafty, superstitious, licentious, cowardly, and cruel. Twice he induced his wife to lie for him; and in both cases Jehovah cursed the men to whom she lied, but never rebuked either her or Abraham. He turned another wife with her child into the wilderness, where, according to the story, she would have perished, had not an angel saved her; and he receives more credit from Jehovah for his willingness to murder his son than for any other deed of his life.

Of Isaac we know but little; but, like his father Abraham, he was cowardly, lying, and selfish, putting his wife's chastity in hazard to save his life; though, as

the event proved, there was no danger whatever. The blessing that he gave his son in his old age shows the character of the man. Part of it reads, "Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee." That is essentially Jewish and Jehovistic. Isaac had the same feeling for his pet son that Jehovah had for his pet nation.

Of Jacob we know considerable: he was an especial favorite of Jehovah: he loved him, if Paul is to be believed, even before he was born, and gave him, through life, many signal instances of his favor. Yet he was a liar, cheat, slaveholder, polygamist, and essentially mean man. He lied to his father, most shamefully lied, and in a way that showed him to have had large practice. He cheated his brother and his uncle; and when his sons murdered the men of a whole city, and took all the survivors captive, this is what the selfish old stock-raiser said: "Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land; . . . . and I shall be destroyed, I and my house." No rebuke for the horrible crime committed, no word of pity for the widow and orphans; but, "*I* shall be destroyed, *I* and *my house*." "Ye have troubled *me*." If they had not troubled him, and he had been in no danger, it is evident that the deed would never have troubled him.

Yet this is the man whom Jehovah blesses, and with whom he converses; to whom he makes splendid promises, and with whom he wrestled a whole night, and lost, Jacob obtaining a blessing, which appears to have been the prize, though at the expense of a dislocated thigh.

Another of the favorites of Jehovah was Moses, a man, apparently, of a good deal of mental ability for the time in which he lived, and proud of his nation, yet crafty, harsh, exacting, and blood-thirsty. He murdered an Egyptian, fled to Midian, married the daughter of a Midianite priest, and lived there for forty years. One might suppose that he would have had some respect for the people of this land of his adoption. Yet, on the journey through the wilderness, he sent an army against Midian, that slew every man, but saved alive the widows, babies, and girls. As they returned from the massacre with the weeping captives, Moses meets them, and cries out, "Have ye saved all the women alive? Now, therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him:" the girls they were to keep alive for themselves. What Camanche chief ever committed a greater atrocity than this? And yet he was one of Jehovah's favorites, talking with him for hours together as familiarly as one man talks with another.

After the death of Moses, Joshua became the leader of the people. His public life was that of a marauder and human butcher, who seems to have had no more pity than a hungry tiger. For years, at the head of a band of cut-throats, he went through Canaan among a peaceable people, destroying their cities, killing men, women, and children, and distributing their wealth and their country among his followers. "The Lord," we are informed, "was with him wherever he went;" and the result is told in the bloody record: "They utterly destroyed all that was in the city [Jericho], both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and

ass, with the edge of the sword." And again: "Joshua drew not his hand back until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai." So friendly was Jehovah with this man, and so much sympathy did he have with him, that on one occasion, when the people of the country united to defend themselves against this godly marauder, and were repulsed, and the daylight failed, as Joshua pursued the flying host, Jehovah stayed the sun in the heaven for about a whole day that the massacre might be complete, and rained down great stones from heaven upon the poor wretches who were fighting to save their families and their homes.

I question whether the whole world's literature presents a bloodier page than that of the tenth chapter of Joshua: —

"And that day Joshua took Makkedah, and smote it with the edge of the sword; and the king thereof he utterly destroyed, them, and all the souls that were therein.

"And he smote it [Libnah] with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein: he let none remain in it.

"The Lord delivered Lachish into the hand of Israel, which took it on the second day, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein."

Then follows a list of other cities whose inhabitants were butchered, from the helplessly old to babes at the breast; and the document ends: "So Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings: he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that

breathed." There is good reason to believe that some who are clamorous for God in the Constitution desire just such a God as this. In a fair intellectual struggle, they acknowledge that they are no match for their opponents; but with soldiers, muskets, cannon, and this Israelitish Moloch, on their side, they would leave none remaining, "as the Lord God of Israel commanded."

There is another man of God who must not be forgotten in this connection, — the Jewish Hercules, Samson. An angel of Jehovah foretold his birth. When he was a child, Jehovah blessed him. On the occasion of his marriage, he wagered thirty changes of raiment with thirty young men that they could not find out the meaning of a riddle which he propounded to them. Having lost, the Spirit of Jehovah came upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon and slew thirty men, stripped them, and gave their garments to the young men (Judges xiv. 19).

Can those men who desire Jehovah to rule over this nation have read these passages? If they have, do they believe them? If they do, how dare they present this gamblers' companion, and instigator of murder, for our acceptance and worship?

On another occasion "the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him." We naturally look for some corresponding lordly deed; and we find it. He found a new jaw-bone of an ass, and put forth his hand and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith. We should like to know what the nine hundred were doing while he slew the first hundred. A man a minute gave him sixteen and a half hours of steady murder. There stands the butcher; here lie his victims; and

he exclaims, "Heaps upon heaps, with the jaw-bone of an ass have I slain a thousand men." But now he is sore athirst: his long, unremitting labor has made him faint, and he is ready to die: unless he can obtain water, he must perish. What is he doing now? kneeling! praying! Can it be possible that such a murdering wretch as that can pray? Certainly: he has a God, the very image of himself: it is Jehovah. Listen to his prayer: "Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant; and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?" Jehovah heard the prayer of his faithful servant, and from the bloody, battered jaw-bone flowed water, that quenched his thirst, and his spirit revived.

Then comes Jehovah's great friend David, of whom he said, "I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will" (Acts xiii. 22). He must have seen what a noble man he was destined to be. After the death of David, Jehovah says of him, "My servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do that only which was right in mine eyes" (1 Kings xiv. 8). He was fearless, firm, generous at times, pious, and poetic: but he was guilty of almost every crime; and it is quite safe to say that no criminal as great as he lives in any civilized country to-day. When he was not more than sixteen years of age, he murdered two hundred men to please his prospective father-in-law, and mutilated their persons in a way that would disgrace a man-eating savage (1 Sam. xviii. 27).

He was captain of a gang of banditti; and in return for the hospitality of the king of Gath, to whom he

fled when Saul pursued him, killed the inhabitants of a whole city with whom that king was friendly, leaving not a soul alive, lest they should tell the tale of his villany (1 Sam. xxvii. 9–12). And yet, after this, he says, "The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me" (2 Sam. xxii. 21).

This reminds me of an epitaph that I once saw in Wales over the grave of a prize-fighter and drunken scoundrel: —

> "A man so true, there are but few,
> And difficult to find;
> A man so just, and true to trust,
> There is not left behind."

But this was when David was a young man: perhaps he repented, and became a changed character, in his riper years.

In the latter part of his life, Rabbah, a city of the Ammonites, was taken; and David "brought forth the people that were therein, and put them under harrows of iron and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick-kiln; and thus did he unto the cities of the children of Ammon" (2 Sam. xii. 31). To find the equal of such a cruel wretch as this, we need to read the annals of the Fiji Islands.

But he certainly repented before he died. Not he: he had nothing to repent of. Jehovah acknowledges that he had done but one wrong deed in his whole life (1 Kings xv. 5); and that he had repented of long before. With his dying breath, the hoary sinner advised his son Solomon to kill the men whose lives he had sworn to spare.

Time fails me to tell of Rahab the harlot, who saved her life by betraying into the hands of murderers her own city; of Jephthah, who offered up his daughter a burnt-offering to Jehovah; Jael, who murdered the fugitive king, after receiving him hospitably into her tent; of Ehud, who slew the king of Moab, and who said, as he plunged the dagger into him, "I have a message from God unto thee;" of Jehu, who slew the seventy innocent sons of Ahab, his whole kindred and his priests, and of whom Jehovah said he did what was in his heart; and a host of lesser liars, thieves, and murderers, who are spoken of in terms of praise by Jehovah.

There is scarcely a man or woman mentioned in the Bible, with whom Jehovah was friendly, whose life was not stained by crime that would, in this day, send a person to the State-prison or to the gallows.

Even the prophets of Jehovah, who are generally supposed to have been patterns of all excellency, were far from being models of virtue. Samuel was a liar, as we have seen: he both murdered, and urged others to murder; and found fault with Saul because he saved the lives of kings whom he had captured. Elijah calls down fire from heaven, and kills men with no more concern than if they had been flies (2 Kings i.). Elisha curses children in the name of Jehovah; and bears tear forty-two of them (2 Kings ii. 24). Jeremiah never scruples to lie when the king advises him (Jer. xxxviii. 27); and some of his prayers are only second to the witch-curses of David. Hosea buys an adulteress to live with him (Hos. 1. 3), after having illicit intercourse by command of Jehovah with a prostitute. Is this the kind of God, a companion and

abetter of liars, thieves, and murderers, whose name is to be placed in the Constitution of our country, and whose character is to be upheld as a model of all excellency?

I object to Jehovah in our Constitution because *he is fierce, jealous, cruel, vindictive, and even malignant.* We might as well be lost souls in the hands of a tormenting Devil as to be the subjects of such a God. Moses describes Jehovah correctly: "The Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God" (Deut. iv. 24). The writer of Hebrews has a similar opinion: "God is a consuming fire." Watts, the Christian poet, draws his portrait for us: —

> "Adore and tremble; for our God
> Is a consuming fire:
> His jealous eyes with wrath inflame,
> And raise his vengeance higher.
> Almighty vengeance, how it burns!
> How bright his fury glows!
> Vast magazines of plagues and storms
> Lie treasured for his foes."

Nor is this portrait overdrawn. Jehovah himself, by Jeremiah, says, "I myself will fight against you with an outstretched arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath." No wonder the poor Jews suffered under such circumstances. To Moses he says (Deut. xxxii. 22), "A fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell;" and again, to Jeremiah, "Ye have kindled a fire in mine anger, which shall burn forever." If we heard a man talk so to his children, we should set him down as passionate, revengeful, unreasonable, and utterly unfit to be a parent. It is much less excusable in a God. Shall we make this eternally-

angry and infinitely-furious Jehovah Lord of these United States?

The deeds of Jehovah are in correspondence with his words. He commences his career by a fit of cursing, of which woman obtains the largest portion. He follows this by drowning the entire human race because their conduct did not meet his approbation, and thus made himself king of murderers, who takes the life of the world as a human murderer takes the life of a man.

When he sent Moses to Pharaoh to tell him to let the people go, he said, "But I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go" (Exod. iv. 21): and then we are told that "the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go out of his land" (Exod. xi. 10); and because Pharoah did not let them go, when he had so hardened his heart that he would not, he murdered the first-born of his entire nation.

There is a State-prison at Charlestown, where several hundred prisoners are held. Pres. Grant sends a letter to the superintendent, commanding him to let the prisoners go; but, before the letter reaches him, he surrounds the penitentiary with a guard of several thousand soldiers, who have strictest orders to allow no prisoner to go out. The superintendent receives the letter of the President, but, owing to the guard, is unable to set a single prisoner at liberty. "What! will you not let the prisoners go?" writes the President: "then I will show you my power, and make you glad to let them go." He hangs the oldest son of the superintendent in front of the prison, in sight of the heart-broken father and mother, as a punishment for his

disobedience. Can anybody imagine the horror with which such a crime as this would strike the heart of the country? Multiply this by a million, and you have some idea of the crime of Jehovah.

Shall we make this greatest of wrong-doers a God, and our God? Forbid it, says humanity; and it must be forbidden.

When Jehovah came down on Mt. Sinai, he said to Moses, "Charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish," — as moths die when they fly into the flame: so Jehovah is a flaming fire, and the people must be kept out, or they will perish. The precaution was a necessary one. When the ark of Jehovah was sent from the land of the Philistines back to Judæa, the cattle that drew it went into a field near Bethshemesh. The Bethshemites were apparently inquisitive, and thought this a good opportunity to see what was in an old box, of which they had frequently heard; but, had it been Pandora's box, it could not have been more deadly. Jehovah was very angry at their intrusion, and slew of the men of Bethshemesh fifty thousand and seventy! This God can wink at lying, theft, murder, licentiousness, and praise the men who are guilty of these crimes; but, when inquisitive people look into one of his chests, he strikes tens of thousands with death. Shall we place the name of this almighty Bluebeard in our national Constitution?

In the fifteenth chapter of the First of Samuel, we are informed that Jehovah told Samuel that he remembered what Amalek did to Israel when he came up from Egypt: that was, remember, four hundred years before. For this he tells him to command Saul

to smite Amalek, and utterly destroy man, woman, infant, and suckling; and, because Saul did not wholly execute the horrible command, Jehovah was angry with him, and repented that he had made him king over Israel.

During the reign of Queen Elizabeth, nearly three hundred years since, an immense Armada left Spain to conquer England. Suppose Jehovah should command Queen Victoria to kill every man, woman, infant, and suckling in Spain because he remembered this, and that she went with an army and did as she was commanded, but saved the king of Spain alive, and that Jehovah was angry because she had not killed him also: it would not be quite as bad as the conduct of Jehovah to the Amalekites; for they were a hundred years farther removed from the crime said to have been committed by their fathers.

Was viler deed than this ever done in the name of the child-devouring Moloch?

In the time of David, there was a three-years' famine in the land. David inquired of Jehovah what was the cause; and Jehovah answered, "It is for Saul and his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites" (2 Sam. xxi.). Here is a strange story. Saul slew the Gibeonites; and for this God torments a whole nation by famine in the days of David. What can be done? Saul is dead, and probably damned. David asks the Gibeonites how he can make an atonement for the crime done by Saul, and they reply by asking him to hang seven of Saul's sons. David hangs two sons of Saul, and five grandsons, — the sons being his brothers-in-law, and the grandsons his step-sons; and after that we are piously told that God was entreated

for the land. After the seven innocent men were hung, Jehovah caused the famine to cease: his thirst for blood was satisfied.

Bad as are the representations of Jehovah in the Old Testament, those of the New are infinitely worse. Jesus, it is true, calls him "our Father;" and we are told by John that "God is love:" but such a father! and such love! Jesus, whom we are assured is the representative of Jehovah, tells us that those who believe not in him are to "be damned" (Mark xvi. 16); and those who have not administered to him in the person of his believers are to go "into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels" (Matt. xxv. 41). Again: he tells us that "all who do iniquity shall be cast into a furnace of fire, where there shall be wailing, and gnashing of teeth." There the doomed wretches, according to the apocalyptic seer, are to "drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and they shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb, where the smoke of their torment ascendeth for ever and ever" (Rev. xiv. 10); where, as good Dr. Watts so beautifully expresses it, —

> "Tempests of angry fire shall roll
> To blast the rebel worm,
> And beat upon his naked soul
> In one eternal storm."

Jehovah made this hell of horror. Before him stand earth's millions, more numerous than her sand-grains. He calls up the few, the chosen few, who were mean, ignorant, or sycophantic enough to worship him, — not

one in a thousand: to the rest he turns, and, with a voice that shakes the distant stars, he roars, "Depart, ye cursed!" Down drop the myriads, — men, women, fathers, mothers, beautiful maidens, noble men; the sweetest poets, the best of mechanics, the boldest navigators; painters whose creations have gladdened the eyes of many generations; musicians who have made the air more melodious for all time; true believers, miscalled infidels, who have broken the shackles of priestcraft and superstition from the limbs of millions, — down they go into that lake of fire, to hear Jehovah's laugh re-echo through the caverns of the damned, and his voice saying, "I told you in my Word that I would laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear came." And to all eternity the jailer holds his captives, and applies his tortures; for "their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

This revelation of Jehovah we owe to Jesus, who, we are told, is Jehovah in another form; and he frequently anticipates the time when he shall execute his wrath upon the helpless victims that shall stand before his blazing throne.

The fact is, that this Jehovah is the idol of a Syrian mountain-tribe, that has been foisted upon the rest of mankind under the penalty of eternal torments, and modified from age to age, but his worst features retained even to our own day. I arraign him in the name of the millions who are held by him in spiritual bondage; in the name of the freemen of America, whose enslavement is sought by the incorporation of this tyrant's name into the charter of our liberties. Away with you, hideous monster, in whom meet the worst vices of the barbarous people who made you,

and the ignorant and fearful who still believe in you! You may do for God of the wolves that prowl over our Western prairies and hunt down sick buffaloes, or the hyenas that make night hideous in your Holy Land. Your name may properly be inserted on the black flag of every pirate vessel, between the death's-head and the cross-bones. Infinite tyrant, king of miscreants, woman-curser, soul-tormentor, destroyer of the world, architect of hell, inventor of its tortures, and supplier of its eternal fires, go with your co-partner, the Devil! You belong to the ignorance, brutality, and lust of an age long past. Go to the hell to which you have so long consigned the best representatives of our race! and may your name and history alone remain for a warning and a lesson to all generations!

I am told that Jehovah was the highest ideal of the Divine that the Israelites could form at the time. I do not object to this: so Zeus was the highest ideal of the Greek, and all Hellas united to do homage to their god of gods. Shall we incorporate Jupiter with our Constitution, or acknowledge that he is god because an intelligent people once regarded him as such?

I have generally argued as if the Bible was a record of facts, and its God a reality. Most of you know better. The Bible is no more of an authority to you than the Book of Mormon. To you its God does not exist, and you may therefore think he is perfectly harmless. You may remember that the Greeks besieged Troy for weary years in vain, but at length accomplished by stratagem what they could not do by force of arms. They made a large wooden horse, and filled it with armed men, and retreated to a distance as if they had broken up the siege, and patiently waited for the re-

sult. The Trojans, finding their enemies gone, came out of the city, and soon spied the harmless wooden horse. "Let us draw it into the city," said they. It was done; but, that night, out issued the armed men, opened the gates to their companions, who had returned, and Troy fell.

This God may seem to be a very harmless fellow, since he is only a thought god or a paper god; but, admit him into our Constitution, and out will come the army of fifty thousand priests that are hidden in his bowels, the gates will be opened to our enemies, and religious freedom be no more.

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